

1992

Quest for Aboriginality - the Wildcat novels of Mudrooroo

Garry Rosser
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Rosser, Garry, Quest for Aboriginality - the Wildcat novels of Mudrooroo, Master of Arts (Hons.) thesis, Department of English, University of Wollongong, 1992. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/2197>

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

QUEST FOR ABORIGINALITY

— THE WILDCAT NOVELS OF MUDROOROO.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement the
award of the degree

M.A. (Hons.)

from

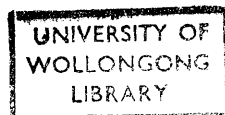
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

GARRY ROSSER, B.A., Dip. Ed.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

1992.



INTRODUCTION

It may seem ironic that the quest for national identity, a phenomenon frequently associated with colonial and post-colonial cultures, is problematic for Australian Aboriginals — people who have lived in this country for tens of thousands of years. The fact is, however, that only since their colonization have Aboriginals been perceived as an homogeneous group. Prior to 1788 they regarded themselves as different and distinct peoples. It is only recently, particularly as a response to White Australia's celebration of its two-hundred-year occupation of Australia, and with the implementation of an Aboriginal land-rights campaign, that pan-Aboriginal identity has emerged.

But while Aboriginal, colonial and post-colonial cultures might share a quest for national identity, contemporary Aboriginal culture is neither “colonial” nor “post-colonial”. Indeed, Aboriginals can still be regarded as “colonized”, their literature “writing back”¹ to White Australia rather than against a European centre. Nor, on the other hand, is Aboriginal literature strictly “indigenous”, if indigenous is defined as that which is produced in a form practised in traditional Aboriginal culture. On the contrary, such culture is principally performance oriented and oral, and frequently resistant to the singularity and popularization associated with the written, published word. Thus, while contemporary Aboriginality can readily be affiliated with traditional culture, Aboriginal literature has a more problematical connection with it. In this discussion therefore, “Aboriginal literature” can loosely be defined as that written and published

¹ The Empire “writing back” to its European centre is the theme of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, edited by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

in English — or english ² — by those who have an identity as indigenous Australians.

To ask then, what is Aboriginality? is to address the question of identity within a context of Aboriginal response to non-Aboriginal hegemony — the response of the "colonized" to the "colonizer". It is out of such culture conflicts (as that between Aboriginal (Black) and non-Aboriginal (White) Australians), that such concepts as "sameness" and "difference", "other", and "coloniser" and "colonised", have been formed. Mudrooroo's *Writing from the Fringe* is an analysis of the Black/White Australian conflict in the light of contemporary literary theory. His Wildcat novels, *Wild Cat Falling*, *Doin Wildcat* and *Wildcat Screaming*, foreground the quest for Aboriginality in a fictional mode.

Mudrooroo was born at East Coballing near Narrogin in the West Australian wheat-belt in 1938, and grew up at Beverly, eighty kilometres from Perth. He and his nine siblings were raised by their Aboriginal mother in a decrepit house near an Aboriginal shanty settlement. At nine he was removed from his family and sent to a Catholic orphanage where he received a rudimentary education. Then, at seventeen he was sentenced to a year's gaol at Fremantle for petty crime. A second sentence of eighteen months followed after only a week's freedom. These gaol sentences provide Mudrooroo with material that is critical for his Wildcat novels. Time and again he returns to the experience of gaol as a source of images to describe the impasse between Black and White cultures in Australia.

In 1958 Mudrooroo was sent to Melbourne by the philanthropic Protestant Aboriginal Advancement League, one of whose executives was the author Mary Durack. Here he worked for seven years in the Motor Registration Office and the Victorian State Library, during which time he

² The distinction between "English" and "english" is that the first is the "standard" English inherited from the British Empire, while the second is the language which "English" has become in post-colonial societies.

wrote *Wild Cat Falling*. Then he travelled overseas, living in Asia and India, returning to Melbourne in 1976 where he worked at the Aboriginal Research Centre of Monash University. Later he went to Perth to take up a teaching position at Murdoch University, and to write full-time. At present he holds a position at Murdoch University. He also lectures in Black Australian Literature at the University of Queensland. Mudrooroo is a prolific writer, a recently compiled summary of his literary output listing over fifty pieces of primary material.³ As well as writing he also works in a number of Aboriginal Arts projects throughout various Australian states.

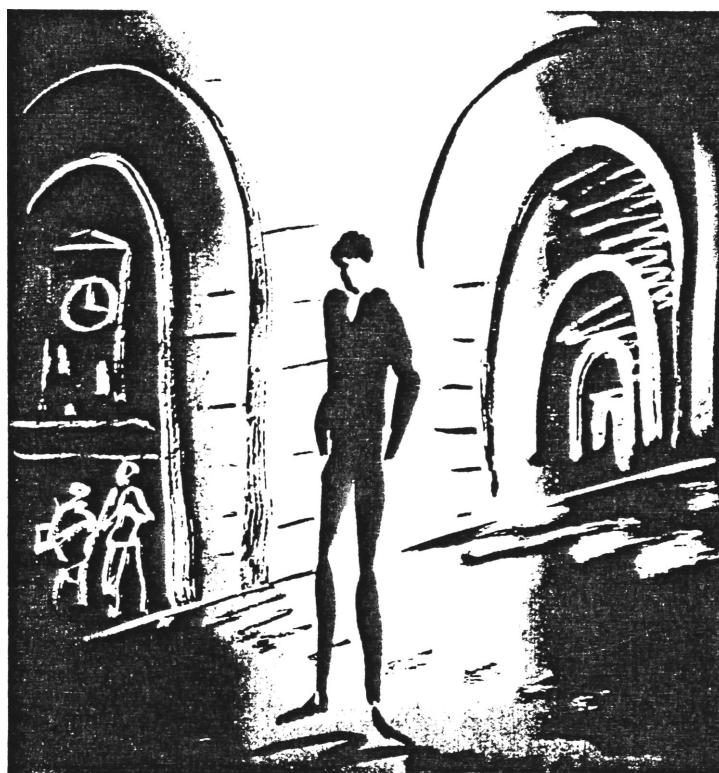
Mudrooroo has written under various names throughout his literary career. As the author of *Wild Cat Falling* his name originally appeared as "Colin Johnson". On the cover of the 1992 edition of this work however, this name has been explicitly erased, "Mudrooroo" appearing dramatically highlighted beneath the crossed-out "Colin Johnson". Mudrooroo's point here is clear — he wishes to cancel his association with White identity, in favour of one that is explicitly Black. Yet this name-change has not been straightforward. The dust-jacket of the 1988 edition of *Doin Wildcat*, for instance, notes that "Johnson" was changed to "Narogin" as a "special Bicentennial Project"; then, the 1991 edition of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* refers to its author as "Mudrooroo Nyoongah". In an interview with Liz Thompson Mudrooroo clarifies his position :

I was born in Narrogin WA - hence my name. In 1988 I decided that to have an English name wasn't very appropriate. Seeing as I was born in a little place outside Narrogin...and since Narrogin was the name on my birth certificate I decided I would use "Narogin" at least as my *nom-de-plume*. "Mudrooroo"...means paperbark in the Bibbulmun language which is my mother's people's language; and so I changed my name to Mudrooroo. Now that evolved into "Mudrooroo Nyungar" ["Nyoongah"] which is my people's name....So my

³ Hugh Webb, "The Work of Mudrooroo Narogin: 31 Years of Literary Production, 1960-1991", *SPAN*, No. 33. May, 1992, pp.52-72.

IMPRINT CLASSICS

WILD CAT FALLING



~~COLIN JOHNSON~~

MUDROORO

name now is Mudrooroo Nyungar and my *nom-de-plume* is still Narogin.⁴

"Mudrooroo" rather than "Narogin", however, has appeared as this author's name on works published since 1991. For this reason "Mudrooroo" is used in this discussion.

This strategy in self-naming suggests the complexity involved in pinpointing the wider meaning of Aboriginality. Mudrooroo's rejection of White naming constructs, means that he must confront unresolved issues of naming, according to Aboriginal methodologies. Similarly, use of such Aboriginal tribal and regional names as "Koori", "Murrie" or "Nyungar" to signify all Aboriginals, may cause offence or unintentional deception. In the present discussion therefore, the generalized "Aboriginal", as both a noun and an adjective, is used to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of Australia.

Mudrooroo's novel *Wild Cat Falling* (1965) was the first published novel written by an Aboriginal, and five others have followed — *Long Live Sandawara* (1979), *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring The Ending of the World* (1983), *Doin Wildcat* (1988), *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (1991) and *Wildcat Screaming* (1992). He has also written numerous poems — including *The Song Circle of Jacky* (1986) and *Dalwurra, The Black Bittern* (1988) — plays, short stories and literary criticism.

Writing from the Fringe (1988) is an extended study of modern Aboriginal literature. In it Mudrooroo explores in a theoretical way the problematic of Aboriginal identity. Written from an Aboriginal perspective it argues that an essential aspect of Aboriginal culture lies outside European canons, and it is this — Aboriginality — that has been blatantly neglected by Western literary conventions.

4 Liz Thompson ed., *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers and Performers*, (Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p.59.

Mudrooroo's three Wildcat novels also focus on the question of Aboriginality. Together they demonstrate a clear development in his perception of colonial and post-colonial, and post-modern literary theories. *Wild Cat Falling* exemplifies a Fanonesque interpretation of national identity formation. *Doin Wildcat* examines the question of Aboriginal representation — that is, its comprehension by and appearance to Black and White audiences, in Australia and overseas. It also explores various aspects of post-modern stylistics, arguing, by implication, for a unique Aboriginal english. Mudrooroo's latest novel, *Wildcat Screaming*, by contrast, expands the ideological position from which *Wild Cat Falling* is written. It subscribes to a basically Foucauldian framework, and implies an understanding of Aboriginality that attempts to reconcile the antagonistic perspectives of Black and White cultures.

PART 1.

Writing from the Fringe opens with a statement of Aboriginal awareness of its position as an indigenous, minority culture — one now seeking to be heard by its non-Aboriginal audience:

Aboriginal literature begins as a cry from the heart directed at the whiteman. It is a cry for justice and for a better deal, a cry for understanding and an asking to be understood. In some ways it is different from other national literatures which are directed towards a national readership and only after that to other nations. Black writers, such as Kevin Gilbert and Oodgeroo Noonuccal have a White Australian readership firmly in mind when they write and it is their aim to get across to as many people as possible the Aboriginal predicament in Australia.⁵

The idea is developed that Aboriginal writing is a response to White oppression, and must be "seen holistically within a cultural, historical and social context". There is a strong endorsement of Bruce McGuinness' call for Aboriginal control of literary production and distribution, for instance. Mudrooroo also attacks what he calls "assimilated" Aboriginal texts, by which he means that Black Australian literature which has "compromised" itself to "White forms" and "Standard English". These texts, he says, are the victims of White policies and attitudes, especially those evident in educational systems:

By preventing [Aboriginals] access to their culture, by denying them the free use of a variety of Aboriginal poem types, it was assured that what culture they were exposed to would be Anglo-Celtic.⁶

⁵ Mudrooroo Narogin, *Writing from the Fringe. A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990), p.1.

⁶ Narogin, *Writing*, p.45.

Mudrooroo's argument here is closely patterned on the paradigm of national identity formation first outlined by Frantz Fanon in the 1950s.⁷ Fanon suggested that to many people, the contemporary world is divided into two hostile camps, Black people and White people, and that the source of conflict between these is oppression. Masking this oppression, he said, is capitalism and colonialism, the latter making "clear divisions" and "dualistic oppositions" between the "colonizer" and the "colonized". The "colonizer" is that dominating entity in culture conflict that effects control over the "colonized"; while the "colonized"—often an unhomogenised group that is unaware of its "sameness" to itself and its "difference" from the "colonizer"—remains in the shadow of the "colonizer", constantly striving to be its equal. For the "colonized" to purge itself of the degrading effects of colonialism it must create a violent revolution — a "collective catharsis". Until such is achieved, the "colonized" will have no legitimacy in its own right.

This model assumes a separation of "colonizer" and "colonized", and a national identity quest by the "colonized" for something which is "same", that is, something "pure", "genuine" or "authentic", as opposed to that which is "corrupted", "fake" or "Westernized". Mudrooroo's interpretation of Aboriginal literature, therefore conforms to what Fanon describes as the "third phase" of the "colonised's" consciousness. Mudrooroo puts it:

...the Aborigines in Australia are under an intense and constant cultural barrage which may in future utterly destroy their culture except for some fossilized traditional remnants. I believe that it is up to the writer to resist this barrage and strive to create works based on Aboriginality....Aboriginal

⁷ In the early 1950s Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) outlined a model of national identity formation in *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, published in 1952. This has been translated by Charles Lam Markmann as *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967). Fanon's latter work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington, (London: Penguin Books, 1961), is a re-working of his original thesis.

literature is in this...third phase [of resistance to the "coloniser"], the fighting phase, in which there is an upsurge in literary production, with many people who never thought of creating beginning to create....⁸

In an essay on the Aboriginal writer Lionel Fogarty, Mudrooroo acknowledges his indebtedness to Fanon, directly applying Fanon's thesis to Fogarty's development as a poet:

I would like to stress that Lionel Fogarty does not rely on European models for his poetry, and that it is his genius which shapes his verse. He was born a victim in a world in which he and his people had no say. In Frantz Fanon's sense he (and his people) was the *native other* contrasted with the Coloniser subject which sought to destroy the blackness within him, to render him as an object into a subject reflecting the Coloniser. In the Coloniser's world the only subject to aspire to be was that of the coloniser, and the native object was seen as a coming-to-be subject fashioned on the British model...[T]he only result was the coming-to-be of Lionel Fogarty the poet whose genius born from the struggle gave birth to a new style, or system of poetry drawing from a myriad of influences...⁹

As well as Fogarty's poetry, Mudrooroo cites Bob Bropho's *The Fringedweller*, Bill Neidjie's *Story About Feeling*, Stephen Muecke's transcriptions of Paddy Roe's stories, and his own works as examples of texts that are "authentically" Aboriginal. In contradistinction to these he attacks Sally Morgan's *My Place* and Glenyse Ward's *Wandering Girl* as texts that fail to resist the linguistic hegemony of the coloniser.

Mudrooroo argues that these latter works occupy a place in the canon of Western literature that is "already created" — that is, they belong to the "battler genre". His claim is that writing which truly expresses Aboriginality avoids adoption of Western genres, exploring stylistics

⁸ Narogin, *Writing*, p.29.

⁹ Colin Johnson, "Guerilla Poetry: Lionel Fogarty's Response to Language Genocide". *Westerly*. No.3. September, 1986.pp.48-9.

inherent in traditional Aboriginal literature — stylistics such as annotating one's "life story" rather than constructing "autobiography" or "biography".¹⁰ While most Aboriginal writing to date exemplifies "white dominance and either Aboriginal acceptance of, or a seeking to come to grips with, this dominance", *My Place* and *Wandering Girl* are unequivocally "assimilationist". Mudrooroo is also critical of these works because they are individualised stories, "the concerns of the Aboriginal people [being] of secondary importance". "Aboriginal artists", he says

are socially committed, and therefore have this commitment firmly in mind when they write. It is part of the tradition of Aboriginal culture to perceive the artist not as an isolated individual, alienated from his or her society and interested in only extending the bounds of his or her own private vision, but as a value creator and integrator.¹¹

Thus Morgan and Ward, as individuals in pursuit of their personal identities within a multicultural Australia, are perceived as betraying their Aboriginal heritage.

One criticism that can be levelled at Mudrooroo's application of Fanon's argument here, is that it demands an unambiguous separation of the positions of the "coloniser" and the "colonised" — so-called "assimilated" texts for example, are criticised for their lack of "purity". But is such a separation possible? Cannot Mudrooroo's very own practices of writing in English — or english —, and publishing — foremostly for a White audience —, be interpreted as "compromising" his own "authenticity"?

Furthermore, his contention fails to address the enormous range of issues thrown up by the attempt to establish an homogeneous pan-Aboriginal identity. These issues stem not just from the fact that

¹⁰ For Mudrooroo's discussion of the differences between "life-story", "autobiography" and "biography" see Narogin, *Writing*, pp.14-15; 148-163, and Colin Johnson, "White Forms, Aboriginal Context", in *Aboriginal Writing Today*, *Aboriginal Writing Today*, eds.. Jack Davis and Bob Hodge, (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies), 1985.

¹¹ Narogin, *Writing*, p.24.

Aboriginals have lived traditionally throughout Australia as different peoples, but that there are today other cultural demarcators — urban and rural differences, and differences along lines of status and income, for instance. While Morgan and Ward clearly ally themselves with an “Aboriginal ” movement in Australia — both have a high public profile as artists who are self-proclaimed “Aboriginals” — they do not share Mudrooroo’s politics. His stance in this regard is that of an “activist”, and it is fellow “activists” who he cites most often in *Writing from the Fringe*. *My Place* and *Wandering Girl* are attacked then, from this perspective: “[This] literature is not committed to educating individuals as to their place in Aboriginal society, but [is] committed to explaining Aboriginal individuals to a predominantly white readership.”¹²

The parameters of *Writing from the Fringe* however, extend beyond just a defence of a purist notion of Black Australian culture. Rather, Aboriginality, Mudrooroo explains, incorporates a “matrical essence” in which “new social entities...will reflect the underlying humaneness of Aboriginal being”:

The term Aboriginality has arisen because it provides an ideology by which Aboriginal literature may be judged. It is much more than this however, for it provides a lifeline by which dissociated individuals may be pulled back to their matrical essence...Essentially, it is not a static ideology based on fixed traditional ways of expression and culture, but is as Kevin Gilbert declares in his introduction to *Living Black* (1978) a way of building a contemporary Aboriginal culture, a radical re-education of Aborigines by Aborigines and at the direction of Aborigines.¹³

Aboriginality then, is a sense of shared experience, a common consciousness of Blacks having suffered and struggled under White hegemony, and a promise of reconstructing culture that links with the

¹² Narogin, *Writing*, p.14.

¹³ Narogin, *Writing*, p.48.

traditional past. It has no tolerance whatsoever for those ultra-conservative Romantic structures that represent Aboriginals as “a physical prototype, head-banded, bearded, loin-clothed, sometimes ochred, one foot up, a clutch of spears, ready to hunt or exhibiting eternal mystical vigilance.”¹⁴ Nor does it accept White legal definitions of identity. Up until the 1970s these varied considerably from State to State and from Territory to Territory across Australia — before 1972, note Gale and Brookman, “a person could be ‘Aboriginal’ in South Australia, move into the Northern Territory and become ‘White’, and then shift to Queensland and become ‘native’ again.”¹⁵ Aboriginality advances principles that emphasise specific cultural knowledge and practices outside White constructs of “genetic” and “racial” determination. In other words, it must be lived and learned; it is pedagogical and epistemological, as well as political. In this interpretation Mudrooroo's view echoes that of one of Kevin Gilbert's interviewees quoted in *Living Black*. The speaker is Grandfather Koori :

You say you want Aboriginality back? That means having some rules, don't it? ...I don't care how hard it is. You *build* Aboriginality, boy, or you got nothing. There's no other choice to it. It'll be easier, now, with bits of land handed back to us, here 'n there....You've got the power; it's just a matter of giving all and everyone your nulli. That spirit, that great spirit will give you everything you need to live. That's what Aboriginality is.¹⁶

The effective implementation of such an ideology would radically affect White practices, attitudes and institutions. Professor Colin Tatz summarizes these hypothetical changes as: (1) Whites will start talking *with* Blacks rather than talking *about* them; (2) the Black “problem” will cease

¹⁴ Colin Tatz, *Race Politics in Australia*, (University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979), p.83.

¹⁵ G. Fay Gale and Alison Brookman, *Race Relations in Australia - The Aborigines*, (Sydney: McGraw-Hill Book Co.,1975),p.7.

¹⁶ Kevin Gilbert, *Living Black*, (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, Ringwood,1977), pp.304-305.

to be analysed in terms of the deficiencies of the victims, and will be seen as a White problem resultant from colonialism; (3) mainstream society will acknowledge sympathetically that Aboriginal people are caught between two cultures, and that “coloniser” “aid” strategies of the past have compounded Aboriginal dispossession, marginalization and urban ghettoization; and (4) White society will accept the proposition that Black progress is, in part at least, contingent on the rejection of White values.¹⁷ The place of the Black writer in this change, according to Mudrooroo, is to act as a social catalyst. In resisting the “Whitewash” of Aboriginal culture, it is perfectly legitimate for the Black writer to subvert White literary conventions and undermine the power of the centre-metropolis.

But are the Black Australians condemned only to “write back” to the “coloniser” society — in a language that is not traditionally their own, and to people who are not their own? Or can the Aboriginal authors, marooned though they are on the fringe of the literary establishment, create a cultural alternative that is significant — and saleable — to a non-Aboriginal readership? Mudrooroo confronts the challenge of this question by re-affirming the validity and vitality of what has always been central to traditional Aboriginal culture: Dreaming. “We have to go back to the very roots of Aboriginal culture”, he says, “the ‘dreaming’ we did when we had really dynamic culture....[We] should get into Aboriginal reality, which is the Dreaming *now*...”

When I hear the traditional stories and when I read them I find them a lot more interesting than a lot of the Aboriginal literature being produced now. So I think that in order to create a dynamic Aboriginal literature we have to go back to ...traditional Aboriginal culture. I feel this is the way to go - that we should be developing our own literature and not just

¹⁷ Colin Tatz, *Race*, Chapter 1: “Aborigines and the White Problem”.

utilizing Australian realism which I don't like as a literary medium anyway.¹⁸

Mudrooroo interprets Dreaming fundamentally as a literary device, which, while "authentically" Aboriginal, has features not dissimilar from the Western aesthetic of surrealism, often expressed in literature as automatic writing:

It is precisely in surrealism, or the reliance on dreaming techniques to bring forth literary works, a traditional method of creation, that Aboriginal poetry may retreat from the assimilation situation of the primary school and into an authentic Aboriginality, opposed to assimilation and foreign formats. The aim is to destroy the type of poetry directed at the majority community by poets such as Jack Davis and Oodgeroo Noonuccal and to replace it with the desires in the shape of language and structure which are found in the depths of Aboriginal being. This method is a directed mode of automatic writing, not because there is the intervention of reflection, but because words and images constantly and continually express the same obsessions lying at the basis of individual Aboriginal existence in Australia. This type of poetry, utterly 'committed', expresses what poetry (at least in Western literary theory) should not do, that is give a situational, social and political importance to the genre.¹⁹

Aboriginality then, according to Mudrooroo is an expression of the Aboriginal (collective) unconscious as it connects back to the time of the Dreaming. It is this which is the "lifeline" that joins "dissociated individuals...to their matrilineal essence". It also refers to the whole metatext of Aboriginal reality without some knowledge of which Aboriginal writing is without "significance". Mudrooroo's allusions to "metatext" and

¹⁸ Liz Thompson, *Voices*, pp.58-59.

¹⁹ Narogin, *Writing*, p.38.

"significance", Hodge and Mishra point out,²⁰ suggest that he has interpreted Michael Riffaterre's theory of hidden intertext²¹ to read: Aboriginal texts will trigger for the reader an awareness that signs are indicating a uniquely Aboriginal consciousness and sensibility. Thus a minimal reading along purely mimetic lines will give way to a retroactive reading which will disclose the works' broader Aboriginality. Throughout *Writing from the Fringe* Mudrooroo also uses Roland Barthes' notion that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture".²² Altogether then, Aboriginality is not just Dreaming but "Dreaming *now*". It must account for the past - realities and mythologies - as well as the multiplicity of "tissues" that comprise the Aboriginal reality of the present.

²⁰ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *The Dark Side of the Dream*, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990). pp.112-115.

²¹ Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of poetry*, (London: Methuen, 1980).

²² Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977). Ch. 1.

PART 2.

Since its appearance in 1965 *Wild Cat Falling*²³ has been re-printed more than half-a-dozen times, only the 1992 printing²⁴ differing from its predecessors. In this printing the author's name has been changed from "Colin Johnson" to "Mudrooroo", and an Introduction by Stephen Muecke has been added to precede Mary Durack's Foreword.

This latter piece, written in 1964, is quite a remarkable text in itself. While it was intended primarily to serve the rather patronizing function of introducing its Black author to a White readership, it operates foremostly, as Muecke says, to "smooth over" those aspects of the novel that might prove unpalatable to White audience. Referring to Durack's Foreword, Muecke asks: "What is the function of things like forewords, prefaces, introductions?" Then he answers:

They are texts which smooth the passage of the unknown text. If...the main text is politically strange or unsettling, then the foreword will have the function of ensuring that such contradictions are smoothed over.²⁵

The Foreword also places Colin Johnson in an ambiguous relationship with Black and White societies. On the one hand, Durack, using racist language, compares him with his Aboriginal peers, and seems to celebrate his Aboriginal "authenticity". On the other hand, however, he is presented as an "outsider" to this culture, to some extent resembling a near-White:

Early in 1958, I was asked to find accommodation for a boy who was coming to a job in the city. I expected to see one of the youths we knew but he turned out to be a complete stranger with little of the familiar coloured boy's willing -to -

²³ Colin Johnson, *Wild Cat Falling*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965).

²⁴ Mudrooroo, *Wild Cat Falling*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992).

²⁵ Stephen Muecke, Introduction, *Falling* (1992), p.vii.

please manner. In fact he showed little obvious trace of native blood, but he had, what most of the darker people have lost, the proud stance and sinuous carriage of the tall, tribal Aboriginal.²⁶

What this amounts to is that Durack presents her subject as a "colonizer" might present a "colonized". Aboriginals in general are clearly the "other" — deficient, directionless and despairing; and White mores, it is assumed, will eventually subsume their culture:

By the end of the century the [Bibbulum] tribe had more or less disappeared, leaving a people of mixed white and native blood. Some became assimilated into the white community, but the majority continued to breed among themselves or back into the Aborigines from other parts of the State, resulting in a drifting coloured minority caught in the vicious circle of a lack of opportunity and their own lack of stamina.²⁷

Johnson manages to escape this stigma in part, because he is not truly "Aboriginal":

An above average I.Q. could, however, have been more burden than advantage had he inherited the typical instability of the out-camp people. We observed that Colin was not apparently lazy. He found jobs for himself about the place and did them well. He also had a sense of time and he began to seem — was it possible? — even dependable.²⁸

Durack presumably hopes that *Wild Cat Falling* will be interpreted by its non-Aboriginal audience as an expression of Johnson's *general* social disgruntlement, rather than as an attack on the prevailing White ethos that permits racial discrimination and prejudice. In this sense Durack interprets it as an "existentialist" novel in the European "outsider" fictional mode:

²⁶ Mary Durack, Foreword, *Falling* (1965), p.vii-viii.

²⁷ Durack, p.vi.

²⁸ Durack, p.ix.

....The book should be read as a work of fiction by a young man who, although open to the degenerate influences of native camps and milk bar gangs, has been strong enough to set himself a positive goal requiring detachment and discipline. The honesty of his approach floodlights a sinister and dangerously expanding area of the post-war world that few outsiders can begin to understand. His "make-believe-they-are-alive-kids", convinced that they have plumbed experience and added up the sum of life, haunt a juke-box limbo of abysmal boredom, their only aim to flout accepted morals and behaviour and to provide themselves by theft and violence with the ritual trappings of their cult.²⁹

This Foreword then, attempts to position its author as doubly "other" — as outside Black as well as White cultures. Johnson, Durack implies, is writing from a cultural no-man's-land — his perspective is either utterly subjective, or it is void of social familiarity or insight.

An entirely contrary interpretation of the novel, however, can be developed — one which places Johnson's narrator-protagonist and his "make-believe-they-are-alive-kids" not "outside" cultural determinates and experiences, but firmly "within" them. This interpretation, it will be argued, suggests that the central theme of *Wild Cat Falling* is a quest for identity, a quest that is modelled on Fanon's paradigm of national identity formation. What Fanon poses as a general thesis, Johnson applies specifically to his narrator-protagonist, the hero of *Wild Cat Falling*. Like the central protagonists of such "post-colonial" novels as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and George Lamming's *In The Castle Of My Skin*, Wildcat's story is analogous to the formation of a national (Aboriginal) identity. Equally like these protagonists, Wildcat resists the White masks of cultural superiority and privilege.

²⁹ Durack, p.xvii.

The plot traces the history of an Aboriginal youth — Wildcat — a "bodgie", who like Mudrooroo himself, has grown up with his mother on the edge of a country town near Perth, in the 1960s. Having just been released from gaol he immediately recommences his "battle...with the society that put him there", and after robbing a country store and shooting a policeman, he is returned to gaol.

The novel is structured in three sections, *Release*, *Freedom* and *Return*, and it is framed by White society's most humiliating instrument of containment, gaol. Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman, following Stephen Muecke, argue that the theme of "White desire to restrain Aboriginals" has been present in most Aboriginal literature since the writing of *Wild Cat Falling*: "...black contact narratives", they suggest, "juxtapose the nomadic flow of the Aborigine against white control, white boundaries, white enclosures — the white desire to "stop" the Aborigine".³⁰ Gaol then, is a powerful symbol of such White restraint. It also represents the imposition of "time" into Wildcat's existence. In gaol he is "doing time", unable to be part of a "nomadic flow" which interprets nature through spatial rather than temporal concepts.³¹ Durack's earlier patronising remark that "[Johnson] also had a sense of time..." implies that this was not a norm for most Aboriginals living traditional lifestyles. Such is clearly the case for Wildcat, if not Johnson. Only when he is released from gaol can the fictional character pursue his Aboriginality.

Each of the section titles also has a double meaning. *Release* refers to the narrator-protagonist's release from gaol, while suggesting his inability

³⁰ Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman, *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction, 1970-88*; (Melbourne:McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1989) pp.216-17.

³¹ Part of Stephen Muecke's theory of "nomadic writing" or nomadology is that to Aboriginals living traditional lifestyles, place, not Western notions of time, is central to their "reading [of]the country." (Krim Bentrak, Stephen Muecke and PaddyRoe, *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology*, (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1984), Chs..1, 2.) Thus, gaol for Wildcat is, as Gelder and Salzman point out, an interruption to his interaction with "the nomadic flow": "[*Wild Cat Falling*] comes to life when it momentarily escapes time and returns to place, to the nomadic flow across country". (Gelder, *Diversity*, p.217.)

to express emotional "release" in the face of White constraint. *Freedom* alludes not only to his legal status as "free", having completed his gaol sentence, but underlines with irony Wildcat's "imprisonment" within the constructs of Western systems. And *Return* confirms both the Black and White Australian expectation that a young Aboriginal offender will repeatedly return to gaol, while also underscoring Wildcat's return to his birthplace and the (re)establishment there of links with his tribal roots. This connection is crystalized in a dream Wildcat has when he returns "home" — to the bush area outside Perth.

It is here that he finds the camp of an old Aboriginal, Mr. Willy, the rabbitier who has been in contact with Wildcat's mother since at least the days of his childhood. Mr. Willy is a traditional tribal leader and shaman-like figure, who is Wildcat's great-uncle. He uses his knowledge and power to interpret a dream Wildcat has, while resting at his camp-site. He explains that what has been dreamed has existed long before its dreamer was alive — perhaps since the Dreamtime. Further, it is a dream that joins Wildcat to his Aboriginal forebears, and affirms his Aboriginality by linking him to a specific place:

....He begins to sing again, softly, like the humming of a bee, then the words shape on his lips and he breaks off.

"You know that song, son."

"Suppose I heard it somewhere before," I say.

"You dream it," he says. "It belong your country."

"I haven't got a country," I say. "I don't belong anywhere."

"You can't lose it," he says. "You go away, but you keep it here." He claps his hands under his ribs. "Inside. You dream that place and that song too. I hear you sing it in your sleep."

"I have a dream," I say, "but I don't remember when I wake up. A sort of falling dream."

"Might be your granny teach it when you been a little fella. Desert country." He makes a pointing motion with his chin.

"I don't remember any grandmother."

. . . .

"What does it mean, anyway?"

"Belong dreaming time," he says...³²

In the dream a cat asks a crow the secret of its immortality. Then the old Aboriginal speaks the dialogue between them:

"I fly up high, high up to the moon. I get young up there, then come down.' The cat look sorry then. 'I got no wings.'

Then the old crow laugh carr-carr. 'You don't need no wings. You can fly all right. You try now.' See."³³

Finally Wildcat himself recalls the dream. In it he plays the parts of both the cat and the crow — as well as the spectator — but identifies most strongly with the cat. Unfortunately the cat fails to reach the moon, falling back to Earth in terror and humiliation. Yet this is not before the cat-crow creature, a kind of synthesis of both points-of-view, has at least tried to fly, earnestly desiring the mystical space of the moon — that is, the place of Dreamtime immortality:

...I soar into the air with my cat body and my crow's wings, up and up. Almost there. Almost. Don't look down. Keep your cat-crow eyes on the swelling, bright face of the moon. Not down. Not down. But the old earth is pulling you. Got to look down. Crow laughs and cat hates. He has been deceived. It is a trick. Have to have wings to reach the moon....³⁴

The symbolism of this dream is somewhat ambiguous, but can be interpreted consistently as an image of identity formation. Aboriginal culture seems to be represented in Wildcat's experience through the cat, the animal from which Wildcat takes his name.³⁵ The trickster character of

³² Johnson, *Falling*(1965),pp.126-27.

³³ Johnson, *Falling*(1965),p.127.

³⁴ Johnson, *Falling*(1965),p.127.

³⁵ In *Wildcat Screaming* (see below) Wildcat relates: "'Yeah,' I say...people call me Wildcat.'"(p.25) This is Wildcat's first reference to himself by name.

the crow is Western culture, cynically laughing at the hero's return to Earth, unable to escape the imprisoning influences of non-Aboriginal structures. The significant point, however, is Wildcat's recognition of his ability to fly. Through this insight he forms a link with his Aboriginal heritage and perceives a connection between his Black and White worlds. The relevance of flying, as Muecke says in his Introduction to the novel, is that it represents "escape, achievement, or even love".³⁶ Momentarily, Wildcat's identity confusion is resolved. Quoting Chris Tiffin, Emmanuel S. Nelson puts it this way:

'A parable of the acceptance of self', this Aboriginal story underscores the protagonist's profound need to confront, understand and accept his Aboriginality and to come to terms with his tribal past.³⁷

But it is not sufficient, as Nelson indicates it is,³⁸ for Wildcat simply to gain such an awareness. Rather, this must be integrated into the present. His Aboriginality, in other words, does not preclude his experience of the White world. While he may resist and subvert the latter, his dreaming occurs within the context of his pursuit by the police for a crime committed against White established society. Like Mr. Willy — who hunts rabbits, drinks tea, uses Western cooking utensils and has money — Wildcat must reconcile both worlds, and assert his Aboriginality as a unique part of this fusion.

In the first part of the novel Wildcat has little positive contact with his Aboriginal heritage. In fact, for as long as he can remember he has been discouraged, particularly by his mother, from exploring his Aboriginal past. Jessie Duggan's motives for this are based principally on fear — that

³⁶ Muecke, Introduction, p.ix.

³⁷ Emmanuel S. Nelson, "Connecting With The Dreamtime: The Novels of Colin Johnson", *Southerly*, No.3, September, 1986, p.339.

³⁸ Nelson, *Connecting*, pp.337-343.

her racially mixed children would be taken away from her in compliance with the prevailing West Australian laws on "Aboriginal protection"; that she would lose her pension because her White husband had died, thus cancelling her eligibility for Government support; and that her rented house would be returned by the Government for the same reason. She is torn between her submission to "normative" White codes, and her loyalty to her family and tribal relatives. She lives on the edge of both societies, surviving by becoming "other" to both her White "colonizers" and her Aboriginal people. (It is only towards the end of her life that she returns to the latter, with whom she ultimately accepts her "sameness".)

Jessie's assimilationist attitude illustrates Fanon's argument that part of the process of colonization is for the "colonizer" to persuade his "other" that he is culturally inferior to, and materially dependent upon, the "colonizer." Such a "predicament", as Mudrooroo says at the beginning of *Writing from the Fringe*, "has resulted in many Aborigines becoming strangers in their own land, so alienated that sometimes they seem to have lost their will to survive."

All this is deeply resented by Wildcat, who is himself, equally divided — it is from his mother alone that he has received what love he has experienced as a child, but he feels that because she is Aboriginal she is the cause of his self-perceived alienation. As narrator in the text he constantly sets one set of feelings or circumstances in opposition to another. For example:

Mum's always telling me how lucky we are to have this place and her widow's pension to keep us on. She had to put up a fight to convince the authorities that she had been legally married to a white man and wanted to go on living white. Mum cried when the Welfare took the older ones away. She was soft about her kids. Then the baby died and there was only me....³⁹

³⁹ Johnson, *Falling* (1965), pp. 8-9.

Or, when conversing about another Aboriginal (or Noongar) family living near-by, Jessie asks Wildcat:

"...You haven't been with those dirty Noongar kids I hope?"

I shake my head and grin.

"It's no joking matter," she says. "If we get seen with that mob we'll be chucked out of this place quick smart...."

"Some of the white kids play with them."

She starts packing up the plates. "That's different. They belong on the white side of the fence. You've got to prove you do, and don't you forget it."⁴⁰

Wildcat's antagonism to his mother's cultural submissiveness is the genesis of his Aboriginal "activism". Like Mudrooroo himself, he personifies Fanon's third phase of the "colonised's" consciousness — he resists the "intense and constant cultural barrage" from White society, to be part of "the fighting phase, in which there is an upsurge in literary production". This is the starting point for Wildcat's quest for Aboriginality.

The middle section of the novel explores Wildcat's social alienation. He searches for identity in the codes and mores of his teenage peers — an urban, working-class group of social misfits — and this association reinforces his already negative self-perception. He is now presented as an "outsider" — a romantic, melancholic youth whose manner is detached, apathetic and nihilistic. He occupies a world that is empty and unloving, his days being filled with "cheap wine, casual sex, meaningless encounters, sad memories and an overwhelming sense of loneliness and futility".⁴¹

Within this context the novel has been assessed — by Emmanuel S.Nelson⁴² and William McGaw⁴³ for example — as being of the

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Falling*(1965),p.10.

⁴¹ Nelson, *Connecting*, p.338.

⁴² Nelson, *Connecting*.

"outsider" or "existentialist" genre. McGaw says for instance: "...in *Wild Cat Falling* Wild Cat [sic.] becomes, finally, in true Existentialist fashion, what he himself creates..." Likewise, Mudrooroo claims it to be "Australia's first Beatnik novel, its first existentialist novel...",⁴⁴ and certainly key literary manifestations of existentialism are evident in the text.⁴⁵ Thus, Wildcat is an anti-hero, who, estranged from "normal" society, feels alienated from a false and meaningless world. In seeking identity he grapples with his need to distinguish his "authentic" and "unauthentic" selves, and the attitude with which he approaches everyday life is frequently burdened with "soul-scarring anxieties, ennui and nausea."⁴⁶ Johnson acknowledges the influence of existentialism on his work by quoting directly from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.⁴⁷

This, however, is not to say that *Wild Cat Falling* is just a duplication of its European precursors. Although it adopts the tone of existentialist writing, as well as the "outsider" genre as a form in which the position of the colonial "colonized" is expressed, where it differs from "existentialism" is in its social and political treatment of "outsider" issues, and in the protagonist's consciousness of his "difference" from "colonizer" values. The dialectical positioning of "colonizer" and "colonized" marks Johnson's novel as much as a "post-colonial" text as it is "existentialist".

Further evidence of *Wild Cat Falling*'s affiliation with "post-colonial" literature is in the the narrator-protagonist's constant comparing of himself to White counterparts. In this comparison Wildcat consistently degrades himself, as if he is the object of the "colonizer's" experience. For instance,

⁴³ William McGaw, Book Review: *Doin Wildcat*, *SPAN*, No.,27, October, 1988, pp.108-111.

⁴⁴ Liz Thompson, *Voices*,58.. There is some irony in Mudrooroo's claim that *Wild Cat Falling* is Australia's first existentialist novel, in that he is critical of Glenyse Ward's *Wandering Girl* and Sally Morgan's *My Place* for occupying a place in the Western literary canon that is "already created".(See above pp.8-9).

⁴⁵ For an introductory discussion of the literary manifestations of existentialism see: Frederick R. Karl and Leo Hamalian eds.,*The Existential Imagination:From Sade to Sartre*(London:Fawcett Publications,1963).

⁴⁶ Karl, Introduction, *Existential*,p.11.

⁴⁷ See for example, Johnson, *Falling*,(1965),pp.80-81,and 84-85.

after he has been released from gaol he walks towards Fremantle beach, reflecting:

No one spares a glance for the half-breed delinquent and this is how I want it. I steer away from the ships and turn towards the beach. A few people splash in the mild surf or lie about exposing pink limbs to the burning sun. Funny how they oil themselves over and bake to achieve the despised colour I was born with.⁴⁸

The text then continues:

Some kids are building a castle in the white wet sand, flat-topped with bucket-shaped turrets and a moat. It is the same sort they all build, so maybe it is the kind of place white people dream of living in - pretentious, dominating and secure.

I never had clean beach sand to play on when I was a kid. In fact never saw the sea before I was nine, so I used to build things out of mud. I can see myself now squatting in a corner of the big paddock, small and thin and brown in my patched khaki pants and shirt, lost in the creation of a remembered town....The other things were mines and slag heaps and poppet heads...

The comparison of sand and mud here is interesting in the light of Wildcat's self-positioning as the inferior, the "colonized" — as is his reference to the White children's "castle" and his own "mining town". The "castle" is significant not only because in Wildcat's mind it is an image of "the kind of place white people dream of living in — pretentious, dominating and secure", but because "it is the *same* sort [of castle] they *all* build..."[my emphasis]. This generalization stereotypes White values, — values from which the Aboriginal boy is excluded. He reads the situation as one of "them" and "us", his "otherness" intensifying his self-perception as an "outsider." By contrast with "their" "castle", his "dream" is made

⁴⁸ Johnson, *Falling* (1965), p.31.

from mud — a mining town, complete with slag heaps and poppet heads. While this does not deny the young Wildcat's capacity to imagine, his "dreaming" is more down to earth, more "Aboriginal" in its specificity to place. The episode concludes:

When the other kids found me they used to laugh and break up my mining town. Then I began building towns full of white goblins and I stamped them into the ground in a rage.⁵⁰

Even unconsciously then, Johnson seems to be saying, Wildcat feels oppressed by colonization. His "difference" extends to a projected phantasy of the "colonizers".

In the final part of the novel the narrator-protagonist reaches a point where he can no longer sustain the role — real and imagined — of feeling that he is just the "colonizer's" "other". This marks the book's climax, and Johnson's resolution is again patterned on the model of national identity formation outlined by Fanon. Fanon argues that in the process of colonization, the "colonized" inevitably arrives at a stage of self-effacement and abjection — he/she is reduced by the "coloniser" to an objectified level of humanity — that allows for a kind of self-acceptance. The grounds for this are either total submission, or assimilation, into "colonizer" society, or total opposition. Fanon has referred to this stage as

a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.⁵¹

Wildcat is at this point when, pursued by the police, he stumbles into the camp of the old rabbitier and dreams his cat-crow dream.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Falling* (1965), p.32.

⁵¹ Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.8.

The novel concludes then on a note of profound personal metamorphosis, Wildcat leaving the camp with hope and meaning — "[I want] to live more than I ever knew before. I even feel I might know just a little how to live".⁵² And this freedom is experienced within the context of his integration back into White society, for as he throws away his rifle a policeman "snaps the cuffs on my unresisting hands." His new-found identity, in other words, is realized simultaneously with the enforcement of White structures, structures which Wildcat can now confront with the strength of his Aboriginality. Whereas previously, he said of the police: "[They] all...deserve to die",⁵³ now he acknowledges a form of reconciliation. "'Is he going to live?'" he asks the arresting policeman at the end of the novel,

'...I didn't mean to kill a man. It wasn't in my mind'

The copper is tall with a stern face. He looks at me and I look back at him. I have never found or expected any kindness of pity in a copper's face. Is it possible there is a hint of humanity in this man's eyes? And why?

'He'll live', he says, and snaps the cuffs on my unresisting hands."⁵⁴

While the ending of *Wild Cat Falling*, as McGaw⁵⁵, and others, have noted is "singular and unambiguous", Mudrooroo overturns this closure in the second of his Wildcat novels, *Doin Wildcat*. Here he poses as problematical Wildcat's return to gaol, suggesting that his arrest and containment do not resolve his larger sense of injustice — the injustice an oppressed, "colonized" Black person feels in a dominating, "colonizer" culture. In *Doin Wildcat* that is, Mudrooroo re-casts the question of the place Aboriginality occupies in a world perceived essentially as White.

⁵² Johnson, *Falling* (1965), p.130.

⁵³ Johnson, *Falling* (1965), p.124.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Falling* (1965), p.131.

⁵⁵ McGaw, Review, p.109.

PART 3.

Doin Wildcat ⁵⁶ was published in 1988, the year White society celebrated Australia's Bicentenary. The significance of this date has considerable importance for Mudrooroo, for he changed his name in this year, and in *Doin Wildcat* re-assesses, as Mudrooroo Narogin, many of the "White" suppositions he made twenty-two years earlier as Colin Johnson, author of *Wild Cat Falling*. *Doin Wildcat* is an examination of Johnson's ideological position in regard to Aboriginality. It also functions as a counter-discourse to the original text — Narogin opposes Johnson; a contemporary Aboriginal perspective juxtaposes allusions to, and imitations of, mid-twentieth century European ideologies and generic formats; "writerly" features of post-modern stylistics replace "readerly" features of modernism, and Koori english is set against the "received" "standard" English of the "coloniser". Supporting these oppositions is Narogin's employment of a variety of subversive devices associated with literary post-modernism. Disruptive aspects of "white forms" that is, have been chosen selectively to meet the purposes of Aboriginal activism.

His own description of *Doin Wildcat* demonstrates Narogin's self-awareness in creating this variety of "levels" within his work. In *Writing from the Fringe* he says:

In 1988, I returned to the story [of Wildcat] again in *Doin Wildcat*. The character had gone to gaol, written *Wildcat Falling* [sic.] in gaol as a project of rehabilitation, been released and much later was hired to script his novel. *Doin Wildcat* is on one level the story of the making of the film. On another level it shows what happens to the Aboriginality of a script when it is made into a film by a white director. A third level is to try to escape the conventions of the novel. Conventions such as an ending. Also it was an attempt to write an entire fictional work in dialect and to include some

⁵⁶ Mudrooroo Narogin, *Doin Wildcat*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1988).

examples of contemporary Aboriginal oral literature. All in all, I consider it my best work to date; others consider it my worst.⁵⁷

The pursuit of Aboriginal "authenticity" therefore, is integrated with experimentation in contemporary literary forms and theory. Narogin, the now practiced academic, has transformed his search for Aboriginality into a pursuit of literary stylistics that vigorously re-direct his search for identity. He has shifted his focus from personal to more politically conscious areas of examination.

Furthermore, *Doin Wildcat* has characteristics which resemble the general quest by many contemporary Aboriginal people for national recognition and self-determination. While in *Wild Cat Falling* the narrator-protagonist's story acted as an allegory for Aboriginal striving for national identity in the 1960s, and before, the text of *Doin Wildcat* serves as an icon for modern Aboriginality. Mudrooroo's sophisticated writing in this text, as well as his linking of identity with political pursuits, suggests that Aboriginality is now perceived as functioning principally as a manifestation and an expression of an ideology. In other words, Aboriginality is now interpreted representationally. No longer is it considered, as it was in *Wild Cat Falling*, in just ontological terms — as an ideology to be scrutinized and explored creatively. Rather, *Doin Wildcat* is, as Gelder and Salzman observe⁵⁸, chiefly an exploration of the problem of contemporary Aboriginal representation. Now Aboriginality is perceived as an ideology that has different meanings in the many minds of its participants and observers.

There are two grounds upon which the connection between post-modernism and Aboriginal representation is formed. The first is that traditional Aboriginal literature is "nomadic", and as such has features that

⁵⁷ Narogin, *Writing*, p.174.

⁵⁸ Gelder, *Diversity*, p.223.

are common to post-modern literary practice. Stephen Muecke, in his inventive and exploratory work, *Reading the Country*, describes "nomadic" literature as:

a way of looking which is specific, a way of representing things. It is an aesthetic/political stance and is constantly in flight from ideas or practices associated with the singular, the original, the uniform, the central authority, the hierarchy...without for all that ascribing to any form of anarchy.⁵⁹

Australian Aboriginal cultural roots then, provide Narogin with a parallel for such post-modern practices as subverting the singularity and unity of the text, challenging the centrality and reliability of the author, and replacing the curtailed narrator with a more emancipated voice.

The second ground is that the anti-canonical, decentering ideals of post-modernism are shared by the political radicalism of Aboriginal activism. Johnson first explored this connection in the narratives of *Long Live Sandawara* and *Dr. Woreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, in which historically-based Aboriginal protagonists resist and undermine in different ways, the overwhelming influence of White hegemonic constructs. In *Doin Wildcat* however, it is not so much the narrative structure as the genre itself, that becomes a vehicle for political disruption. In demanding of the reader maximum mobility — in point-of-view, in ideology and in reading strategies, for example— Narogin, as Kateryna Arthur points out, does not provide "any comfortable resting place for the reception of a story or value system....No form emerges as politically innocent or neutral."⁶⁰ The White audience's expectations of textual unity, closure and monologism are thus frustrated and subverted throughout this work.

⁵⁹ Muecke, *Reading*, p15.

⁶⁰ Kateryna Olijnyk Arthur, "Neither Here nor There: Towards Nomadic Reading", *New literatures review*, No. 17, Summer South, 1989; University of Wollongong, p.40.

Arthur also places Narogin alongside Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari and Samuel Beckett, as a writer who "creates a space" between such literary binaries as unity and multiplicity, closure and openness, law and subversion, and stasis and motion. She argues that Narogin attacks such binaries from a marginalized position, redefining centrality and exposing "the intricate relationship between established conventions of genre and of political power".⁶¹ *Writing from the Fringe*, of course, is a manifesto of this position. *Doin Wildcat* exemplifies this perspective in a creative fictional mode.

Another source of Narogin's influence is Michel Foucault⁶². Foucault's thesis on the development of the modern carceral system⁶³ states that between 1760 and 1840 a profound change occurred in Europe in the areas of punishment, imprisonment and prisoner-reform. Before these years monarchical authorities had operated grisly spectacles of public punishment as dramatic displays of their power, but gradually, with the rise of bourgeois rationality, this practice was replaced by a system that emphasized surveillance, correction and prison-reform. In Australia, while elements of the "regime of the spectacle" were slow to disappear and became complicated because of the transportation system, disciplinarianism, Foucault suggests, not only ultimately triumphed but has today become ubiquitous. "Is it surprising", he asks rhetorically, "that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"⁶⁴ Further, he suggests that the apparent failure of the prison system to eliminate crime should be seen as a system success, producing "delinquency...— a politically or economically less dangerous — and, on

⁶¹ Arthur, *Nomadic*, pp.31-32.

⁶² In *Doin Wildcat* and in *Wildcat Screaming* Mudrooroo draws heavily on the works of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), particularly on his study of institutionalization in prisons, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Trans. Alan Sheridan, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1975).

⁶³ See "The Carceral" (from Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*), in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp.234-238.

⁶⁴ Foucault, *Discipline*, p.228.

occasion, usable — form of illegality...producing the delinquent as a pathologised subject."⁶⁵ "This is a system", Hodge and Mishra add,

which could produce docile delinquency in all Australians, viewed as the inhabitants now of an open prison that covers the whole continent....It might seem fanciful to suggest that contemporary Australia is in some respects only a more complex and extensive disciplinary machine than Botany Bay was in 1800. But mechanisms for constructing deviance and maintaining surveillance still exist, in direct line of descent but more efficient and more resourced, with new objects of the disciplinary gaze to join the old.⁶⁶

Narogin makes great play upon such "mechanisms" and "objects", particularly in setting most of the screen-play of *Doin Wildcat* in the defunct Fremantle gaol. This has been turned into "a museum, a bloody museum dedicated to their colonial arts and crafts"⁶⁷ where various rooms have been refurbished for the film — the party scene for instance, is shot in what is nominally a student's loft but is actually the old prison chapel. The university is also used colourfully in this context — it has "all the fakeness of [h]istory seeking to perpetuate itself"⁶⁸. The connections, here between various sites and objects of discipline in the present and the past, are not merely fanciful metaphors. To the contrary — again in the words of Hodge and Mishra, "they provide insight into how these texts and genres were interpreted in the past and how they can be read now, and with what functions and effects."⁶⁹

Doing Wildcat then, links identity and political pursuits in the same literary mode, implying a representational interpretation of Aboriginality. The work's full title, *Doin Wildcat/ A Novel Koori Script/ As constructed*

⁶⁵ Foucault, *Discipline*, p.227.

⁶⁶ Hodge, *Dark Side*, p.137

⁶⁷ Narogin, *Doin*, p.47.

⁶⁸ Narogin, *Doin*, p.61.

⁶⁹ Hodge, *Dark Side*, p.120

by/ *Mudrooroo Narogin*, further highlights it as a sophisticated literary text that takes a radically "active" political position in regard to Aboriginality.

The first phrase *Doin Wildcat* suggests that "Wildcat", both the character and the original novel, will be "done", meaning that they will both be transformed into a new form — in the case of the text into a film, and in the case of the character into someone lesser: he will be "worn out", or "used up", as the Macquarie Dictionary defines one meaning of "done." *Doin Wildcat* recalls too the imposed gaol sentences — "doing time" — that frames *Wild Cat Falling*. The abbreviated *Doin* — without the apostrophe — on the other hand, introduces an Aboriginal perspective of English at a purely language level, something that is reinforced by the *Koori* in the following phrase. The pun on *Novel* here is also significant since it signals a post-modern delight in word-play and self-consciousness, which is again reinforced by the following *constructed*, an allusion to post-modern and deconstructionist idioms. Finally, *Mudrooroo Narogin* has replaced "Colin Johnson" in another specific assertion of Aboriginal nomenclature. Clearly we anticipate that the work which follows will be rich in textual preoccupation and Aboriginal investigature.

The complex narrative structure of *Doin Wildcat* goes a long way in fulfilling this promise. At its simplest level it comprises the narrator-protagonist of *Wild Cat Falling* returning to his original text to envisage its scripting and shooting as a film — the script of which Wildcat himself has written. Wildcat then, is once more the narrator of the "novel", but as he remembers both his life as described in *Wild Cat Falling*, and the event of himself creating that description, he becomes unable to separate "fact" from "fiction". What he recalled, mythologized or invented for *Wild Cat Falling*, and what he now proposes translating to the screen, in fact become confused with what was originally "true". He insists that only the feeling of events remains authentic — "It's got to be like it was in the book, or was

it like that in the book? Only know [h]ow it felt in real life....Christ everythin is startin to get all mixed up — life, book and now film"⁷⁰ Given this tenuous reliability of the author, here, nevertheless, and ironically, is the key theme in the novel — it is Wildcat's attempt to "correct" his original story and at the same time renounce the film that will be made from that text. Thus he comments at one point: "So [h]ere I make the record straight, while the lie continues on in the film" ⁷¹. *Doin Wildcat* then is the only "true" text, veracity seeming to exist in the present alone — in the here and now of the text before us. This is not unlike the specificity and "flight from ideas or practices associated with the singular, the original, the uniform" associated with traditional Aboriginal culture.

Wildcat says he wrote *Wild Cat Falling* in prison while serving the sentence that followed his arrest at the end of that novel. Yet now he explains that it was written there with the help of "nice white social workers", "like that to please em". "The reports went in", he continues, "and the book got written, then published...an so after a dozen years or so I was let out". "Books are all cleaned up", he generalizes, "even mine...cleaned up with an [h]ero whose sort of sad and withdrawn". Just as all this calls into question the "authenticity" of *Wild Cat Falling* so *Doin Wildcat* equally casts doubt the integrity on the filmic representation of Wildcat's life. "Genuine" Aboriginal representation that is, seems problematical, if not elusive.

The film is made under the direction of a Jewish American, Al Wrothberg, who although acknowledging that it will not be a blockbuster, is nevertheless anxious that it makes money — at least the three million dollars his banker has invested in it. To this end then, he sanitises the screenplay for its American viewers, reducing it to romanticised kitsch (and in the process adding yet another text to the list of art-works that has

⁷⁰ Narogin, *Doin*, p.14.

⁷¹ Narogin, *Doin*, p.27.

misrepresented Aboriginal identity in the past).⁷² As well, the homogeneous White discourse in which Wrothberg's fake reality is created is at odds with the vibrant Aboriginal discourse of Wildcat's commentary and musings, just as the film's aesthetic precepts of unity, homogeneity and closure oppose Narogin's anti-modernist intentions. Thus, *Doin Wildcat* plays one generic format — novel, script, film, anecdotal stories, private musings, commentary — against another, setting up a complicated variety of representations of Aboriginality. While all these representations have their own validity — in the minds of those involved — what escapes is the nature, the ontological nature, of Aboriginality itself. And this is precisely Narogin's intent. Aboriginality, he is implying in *Doin Wildcat*, is like the text of the "novel" itself — it is a flexible ideology formed in the politics of White structures, and one which both defies this establishment and celebrates its "difference" from it. If its essence can be appreciated at all it is only from within, from the position, that is, of Black "otherness". While its many representations are shaped by White hands, as an experience it remains necessarily uniquely Aboriginal.

The discussion of *Wild Cat Falling's* ending — where Wildcat submits to the authority of his White captor and returns quietly to gaol — instances these issues of how the original text and the film subvert "authenticity" and become ambiguous representations of Aboriginal identity. In *Doin Wildcat* "that ending", as Bill McGaw comments, is indeed "problematical."⁷³ After shooting the scene in which Wildcat meets the old rabbitier, now named Wally, the narrator discusses his original experience of this meeting. He confirms the importance of the change he underwent, but is unhappy in his resolution of the outcome of events in *Wild Cat Falling*. Wildcat reflects:

⁷² Christopher Pearson traces the history of misrepresented Aboriginal identity in his paper "Aboriginal Identity and Kitsch", *Art and Text*, 14 Winter 1984, pp.41-49.

⁷³ Bill McGaw, Review, p.109.

I knew that I ad to face what I ad done. Knew I ad to, but didn't know ow to finish it off. Ow do yuh end a story, moonlight an roses, or ashes an sackcloth? ⁷⁴

Then, after the film's final scene is shot, Ernie, the Aboriginal actor who plays the character of Wildcat, asserts that the ending is not only unsatisfactory but a betrayal. Speaking to Wildcat, Ernie says:

That fuckin end, bro?...yuh ended it wrong, yuh did. All yuh got is another blackfella endin up in jail. Nuthin good about that. Shoulda ad im shoot it out with those blokes on orses. An not only that, but ee says ee's sorry. Sorry for what they done to im, that's a joke that is? ⁷⁵

The narrator then defends himself, explaining that he had considered two other possible endings — one in which Wildcat would have escaped to freedom in the East; the other, where, with his girlfriend, he would have met Wally and all together they would have made a violent stand against the police. He continues:

"But it didn't appen like that, didn't! Yuh should go to jail, mate an' feel what it's like. It eats away at yer guts. Well, yuh shoot a cop, an what sorta sentence do yuh think yuh'll get? Six months to get yer arse in. Well, the bastards gave me *The Governor's Pleasure*. Is pleasure alright! They throw away the key an yuh got to please that Governor to be let out. So what do yuh do? Inside all yer life, or give in a little — a lot — to get out. That book was me ticket to the outside, bradda.

This suggests that for Wildcat writing itself functions within a White socio-politico imperative, and Black "truth" cannot be told within these structures. In McGaw's words: "The chief authenticity of the ending of *Wild Cat Falling*,...[lies] in its capacity to satisfy society....The chief effect of this is to ascribe truth to a perspective which, it is implied, could not

⁷⁴ Narogin, *Doin*, p.105.

⁷⁵ Narogin, *Doin*, p.112.

previously be told — the marginalized Aboriginal perspective, the Koori perspective."⁷⁶ Again therefore, we can see Narogin's separation of Aboriginal "truth" from White "interpretations". Both *Wild Cat Falling* and Wrothberg's film have never been in Wildcat's control. They have been made to placate White authorities, authorities whose power released Wildcat from prison and then recreated his life as a writer. Archetypically for an Aboriginal in Australian society he feels powerless and compromised.

In discussing the problems of transcribing Aboriginal oral texts into "English", Narogin describes three methods that he believes best preserve the Aboriginality in the original discourse:

If oral texts must be transcribed and written down, then an audio cassette should be supplied along with the book; but if this is impossible, then the editing process utilised should leave the text as close to the original as possible. A third course might be to create a written style in close proximity to the oral style. I have tried to do this in my latest fictional work, *Doing Wildcat, A Novel Koori Script* (1988). This is written in non-Standard English, but without the repetitions and pauses of a true oral text....⁷⁷

He also describes the language of *Doin Wildcat* as "a dialect [that includes] some examples of contemporary Aboriginal oral literature"⁷⁸ which "utilise Aboriginal speech patterns."⁷⁹ Wildcat's narrative, then, is a vernacular that attempts to represent contemporary "Aboriginal English", as Narogin calls it, in english.

The lexicon of this english consists principally of approximating in writing, contemporary Aboriginal speech (speech by *which* Aboriginals, however, Narogin never makes clear). Thus, by dropping initial "h"s and

⁷⁶ McGaw, Review, p.110.

⁷⁷ Narogin, *Writing*, p.111.

⁷⁸ Narogin, *Writing*, p.174.

⁷⁹ Narogin, *Writing*, p.28.

final "d"s and "g"s, writing "yuh" for "you", "me" for "my" and "ee" for "he", and generally spelling phonetically where the dialects diverge, an oral style is developed that clearly defines itself as outside the "'standard' English" which the "colonizer" has inherited from the British Empire. Narogin's mention, on the other hand, of "some examples of contemporary Aboriginal oral literature" refers, presumably, to the anecdotal storytelling of Kevin Coles, the trainee director on the film-set, who tells jokes intermittently throughout the novel. This allows a large number of minor stories to intervene in the realist narrative of the film, disrupting its linearity and recalling the oral roots of Aboriginal culture.

All this creates a new convention for relating experience — a discourse that imitates how Aboriginals speak "naturally" — that is "authentically" — but one which is simultaneously self-parodying and self-expressing. What Narogin gives us in *Doin Wildcat* is Wildcat more or less untranslated, or, if translated, then translated into a new idiom. Paradoxically however, this idiom is "new" only in that it is a re-arrangement of what is "old" (and "White") — namely, "standard" English. It is like Aboriginality itself — created for Black Australians, but in response to White oppression and exclusion.

Mudrooroo's third Wildcat novel, *Wildcat Screaming*, attempts to reconcile this paradox. The implied polarities of "colonizer" and "colonized", and "sameness" and "difference" for instance, are now resolved into a hybridized construct, which suggests an appreciation of Aboriginality without the apparently necessary antagonism between Black and White perspectives. While maintaining that "if we consider ourselves as existing in an Aboriginal cultural matrix, then we must know that part of our culture lies outside European conventions"⁸⁰, Mudrooroo nonetheless now finds ground that is common, and mutually enriching, to both positions.

⁸⁰ Narogin, *Writing*, p.57.

PART 4.

*Wildcat Screaming*⁸¹ was published in 1992, and in the sense that it continues Wildcat's narrative from where he concludes at the end of *Wild Cat Falling* it is a sequel to that novel, published twenty-seven years earlier. It is set in the early 1960s in Fremantle gaol, where Wildcat is serving "ten years at the Governor's Pleasure" — that is, ten years mandatory imprisonment that can be terminated only at the discretion of the West Australian Governor. Through the microcosm of Wildcat's experience here, Mudrooroo constructs a wider picture of institutionalisation, and political intrigue and corruption in the prison and police systems in West Australia. The experience too, provides Wildcat with considerable personal insight, enabling him to resolve, largely, the paradoxical questions of Aboriginality posed in *Wild Cat Falling* and *Doin Wildcat*.

While the plot of *Wildcat Screaming* is a continuation of that established in *Wild Cat Falling*, there are pronounced differences in narratorial, stylistic and ideological presentations in these works. Mudrooroo demonstrates far more stylistic sophistication and literary awareness than Johnson; the manner in which he explores various ideological notions is more flexible and lambent; intertextual allusions are treated with considerably less self-consciousness than they were in *Wild Cat Falling*, and Wildcat's narratorial voice is now detached, confident, dispassionate and controlled. For example, at the end of *Wildcat Screaming*, Wildcat, speaking with the wisdom of ten years gaol behind him, comments on the work of Samuel Beckett, his literary mentor in *Wild Cat Falling*:

There's my row of Beckett, and I begin to check over his style; though I'm beginning to think I need someone with a bit more hope. Life isn't just a matter of going on. I have to get my finger out and so what if I've got about five years remaining and after that I've got to front the board which will

⁸¹ Mudrooroo, *Wildcat Screaming*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992).

judge the first ten years. Have to be nice and bear each and everything.⁸²

Not only, then, has Wildcat's self-perspective changed, but the intense and despairing tone in which he narrates *Wild Cat Falling* has been replaced with a wry sense of self-empowerment and cautious optimism. Rejecting existentialism and accepting the circumstances of his imprisonment, he compromises his anger in order that his release from gaol might be more quickly facilitated.

Throughout *Wildcat Screaming* Wildcat frequently reflects on his original narration, particularly on his motives in creating *Wild Cat Falling*. Essentially, he re-states the conclusion reached in *Doin Wildcat* — that some of the work's substance was designed to buy his way out of gaol: "Then I think over it", he says, "and say: 'But the reason I'm doing this book is to show that I have reformed, that I have remorse...'" ⁸³ Now, however, he also acknowledges that his motives are not entirely selfish. He wishes to share his experiences:

And then it comes to me. 'I want to show how it is when the young convict is released and there is nothing on the outside for him. He's lost; he misses jail; he ain't got no place to go. All he can see in his head is this place beckoning him back.'

Significantly, he continues this soliloquy:

And you know what he [Mr. Reading, the prison welfare officer] says to me, you know what? 'The first thing which you must do is tidy up your English; the word is "isn't", not "ain't"'.⁸⁴

This reveals how ineffective Wildcat's educational assistance has been, and what little support he has been offered in writing his book. Later he comments: "They tell me to watch my grammar and make it right, even though I'm more concerned about the subject matter."⁸⁵

⁸² Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.140.

⁸³ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.49.

⁸⁴ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.47.

⁸⁵ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.136.

There are two points Mudrooroo is implying here. One is a critical comment on the type of education Aboriginals received in White Australian institutions up until the 1970s. This, as he says in *Writing from the Fringe*, prevented Aboriginals access to their culture by assuring “that what culture they were exposed to would be Anglo-Celtic”.⁸⁶ The other point is that in Wildcat’s separation of “my grammar” and “the subject matter” he makes a conscious decision that it is his “grammar” — a literary-based symbol for White values, mores and constructs — which has far less relevance to his creative life than the Aboriginal “subject matter” about which he is writing. Speaking later with the Aboriginal detective Watson Holmes Jackamara, Jackamara says: "...once they [Whites] get on top, that's where they stay, no matter what any of us can do. They run the business and we have to go along with it", to which Wildcat replies: "'Suppose so, never bothered me none, I knew it from the day I was born. '"⁸⁷ This reflective detachment from his life is indicative of a key stylistic difference between *Wild Cat Falling* and *Wildcat Screaming*. Wildcat’s creative energy is now fundamentally directed at producing his novel. His experiences have become the main source from which he draws the “subject matter” of his writing. No longer are his actions perceived as basically reactive to White hegemony.

In his unconscious too, as can be seen in the continuing cat-crow dream sequence, Wildcat moves towards reconciling the "Aboriginal dilemma" (as Narogin puts it in *Writing from the Fringe*) of a Black person living in a predominantly White world. *Wildcat Screaming* opens with the narrator recounting a nightmare in which he identifies with a homeless kitten that finds itself on a pavement outside a White bourgeois home. From across the lawn a mother and child recognize the kitten, but finding it distasteful, they attack and wound it. Eventually the kitten retreats from "your nice

⁸⁶ Narogin, *Writing*, p.45.

⁸⁷ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.137.

clean lives for a long, long spell. " Clearly Wildcat feels abused by White society, desirous of love and understanding (the mother is "oozing milk outa her breasts so that I can smell it and all anxious loving eyes, but not for me"), but is consistently rejected by it (the mother says:"You aren't no child, you're just an animal and should be locked up..."). Later the Wildcat-Crow image of *Wild Cat Falling* returns. At first⁸⁸ Crow — continuing its representation of Western culture — is perceived as a malicious trickster who lures Wildcat into a painful fall, (the moon, interestingly, having peculiarly Aboriginal properties):

And Wildcat relaxes and begins to believe Crow. It won't hurt to try...

That night, the moon leaps up into the sky. Wildcat wary at first gazes at it from the ground. It begins to call him, singing a sweet sky song to him.

Arrh arrh, munya mayeamah yah—arah,

Fly up and touch my skin.

And Wildcat begins climbing this big old gum tree....He leaps off and up...and begins falling, falling, falling, screaming, screaming, screaming.⁸⁹

Then⁹⁰, Wildcat begins to question Crow's purely negative intentions, and acknowledges in himself potential characteristics — wings for instance — of flight and freedom. Rising above icons that symbolize sterile White structures he stares again at the moon, only to fall once more trailing a scream:

He is standing on a platform. Below him the statues surround the tower like an army on parade. The moon shines down on them and their shadows fall away in neat lines....Perhaps he should become one of them...but he wants to fly, not be a stupid statue....He goes to the edge of the platform and steps off. And he is falling, falling, falling and the scream in his head starts up again and he screams and screams. And Crow is swooping beside him, seemingly urging him to fly, or is he?

⁸⁸ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, pp.11-13.

⁸⁹ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, pp.12-13.

⁹⁰ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, pp.39-40.

A monstrous cawing comes from him. He tries to fly, but one of his wings is broken.⁹¹

Finally, there is a resolution of Wildcat's dilemma. It occurs at the conclusion of the work, giving a tone of a "happy ending" to the novel.

Old Crow comes to squawk to me. 'You want to fly?' he says, and I see the gloating look in his eye and I know that he ain't going to teach me anything. I reply, 'Yeah,' and rise towards the moon. I pass through the grille and laugh as I soar high and away from Crow. The night sky is a silver dish. I move under it. I feel the stars beam through my body. I'm as light as feathers, as insubstantial as moonbeams. I exult in my freedom. I leave the barren city behind me and reach the dark thoughtfulness of the bush. I swoop down and alight in Uncle Wally's camp. He sits there muttering a song in the old language. I stand there listening awhile, then he says: 'Sit down, boy.'

. . . .

And then he goes quiet and we sit along that fire and a sense of freedom comes over me. Suddenly, for the first time in a long spell, I feel happy. Absurd, but I am. Now I know that I can make it, and that no one can break me. I have something special in me which can't be touched, which has its own freedom....I get an idea to add to my points. I'm going to make it, and to make it I have to show that I'm reformed. More so I have to fill in my time, and there is a lot of us in jail, and I've written this book and know how to put words together....I can get a Nyoongah group together, teach them English, or writing, or something like that...perhaps I can teach others to fly...⁹²

A number of points are crucial in this process and ultimate resolution. First, Wildcat attains identity without dependency — he teaches himself to fly, not just imitating aspects of his Aboriginal culture, but using them in a way that is personally necessary and meaningful for him. Second, he returns to the bush — symbolic of his country origins and Aboriginal roots. Here he re-discovers the home of his Aboriginal uncle — "Mr.

⁹¹ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.91.

⁹² Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.142.

Willy" in *Wild Cat Falling* — through whom he first learned to view Aboriginal culture positively. Third, now he is not only appreciative of this contact, and re-affirms a union with his Black heritage, but feels that the strength of this new identity can withstand the injustices inflicted by White society. And finally, his last gesture is towards other members of the Aboriginal community. Here Mudrooroo is powerfully manifesting and re-asserting his claim that the Aboriginal artist is not an isolated individual, but functions as "a value creator and integrator."⁹³ Like Grandfather Koori, Wildcat too is saying: "You *build* Aboriginality, boy, or you got nothing."

Another aspect of Wildcat's pursuit of his Aboriginal identity is evident in the juxtaposition of this and his association with Clarrie, the alcoholic, ex-Anzac soldier who is in gaol for exposure offences — "He lost something at Gallipoli, and so became a rummy and flashed what he thought was his manhood at the world."⁹⁴ Clarrie is obsessed with what he remembers of the First World War, and constantly relates these memories to whoever will listen. Wildcat compares himself to Clarrie: "You see I too have been at 'the Cove' so as to speak", he says; and: "I see myself as he is, as I will become after ten years...". Such comparisons highlight the differences between Black and White Australian histories and self-images. Speaking with Wildcat of the disastrous landing at Anzac Cove, Clarrie says, for instance: "'We hit the wrong bloody spot and get just this far up that bleeding beach'", to which Wildcat responds:

'Well, my great-grandfather was at the battle of Pinjarra,'
I retort, not being provocative, but sorta to put him in his silly
old place, though what battle was it when they came up to us,
men, women and children and shot us down making us no
tomorrow. . .

⁹³ Narogin, *Writing*, p.24.

⁹⁴ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.14.

'Never heard of that one, mate,' he [Clarrie] replies, his ears pricking up as if to appropriate it for later use; and I think would Jacko Turk understand this thing they done to us?⁹⁵

Here Clarrie's hollow boasting functions as a pointed reminder to White Australia of how and where its first recognised national self-image was formed, and further, how many White Australians are obsessed with blindly reproducing that image despite its obvious failings and inconsistencies. Mudrooroo uses the Clarrie-Wildcat sub-plot to remind White Australia not just that it formed its identity in a battle fought for a foreign power on overseas soil, but that it is ignorant of Black Australian history, and this history's empathetic understanding of the plight of the Turkish people in their invasion by forces of the British Empire in the First World War. In setting the images of Black and White Australian identity formations against one another, the establishment of White Australian identity clearly lacks the virtue of national self-defence associated with the genesis of the Aboriginal nation. Mudrooroo thus places Black Australian history positively against White history, just as he places the negativity of Clarrie's monotonous repetition of the past, against Wildcat's quest for Aboriginality.

At an ideological level *Wildcat Screaming* demonstrates a marked departure from the Fanonesque position Mudrooroo wrote from in *Wild Cat Falling*. Two main sources of influence affect this change. One is Michel Foucault's study of institutionalization, which Mudrooroo briefly alluded to in *Wild Cat Falling*, particularly in Wildcat's self-reflection on his imprisonment. The other is that set of ideas born from recent sociology and post-colonial literary theory, which proffers the notion that where different cultures co-exist, there is not necessarily the form of conflict first described by Fanon. Rather, "hybridization" of cultures

⁹⁵ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.5.

occur, in which cross-cultural contact, not segregation, becomes established.

Foucault theorises⁹⁶ that from the 16th century, with the rise of the modern state, political power in Europe became directed through a “tricky combination...of individualization techniques and totalization procedures”.⁹⁷ By “individualization techniques” he means those political methods that transform the individual from the subject to the object of his or her experiences. He says there are three such methods: the “division” of persons, so that they feel the victim of manipulation and constraint — he cites imprisonment as an example of this category; the “classification” of persons according to scientific formulae — as is the case in an anatomical approach to the human body; and the “subjectification” of persons — whereby, through a variety of “operations on people’s own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on the own conduct”⁹⁸ independence is relinquished to such authority figures as doctors, priests, psychoanalysts or legal authorities — highly paid altruists. By “totalization procedures” Foucault refers to processes by which state management directly intervenes in almost all forms of human activity, “from the smallest stirrings of the soul to the largest military manoeuvres of the army.”⁹⁹ “The concerns of a well-governed polity”, he says, “now extend from the prince and his conduct down through the customs of the people to the environment itself.”¹⁰⁰ In *Wildcat Screaming* Mudrooroo explores these ideas in Wildcat’s incarceration in Fremantle Prison. Like the “divided person” produced by Foucault’s “individualization techniques” Wildcat becomes, outwardly at least, contained, passive, and “reformed” — effectively he is institutionalized, becoming the “docile body that may be subjected, used,

⁹⁶ See, for example, Foucault, *Discipline*, and “Disciplines and Sciences of the Individual” in Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, pp.169-256.

⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power”, cited by Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, Introduction, p.14.

⁹⁸ Foucault, “Subject”, Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, Introduction, p.11.

⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, “On Governmentality”, cited by Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, Introduction, p.15.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault, “Governmentality”, Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, Introduction, p.16.

transformed and improved.”¹⁰¹ And like the intervention of the modern state into our lives, so Wildcat is subjected to unrelenting surveillance.

“Surveillance”, in fact, is an underpinning concept in *Wildcat Screaming* — a concept which Mudrooroo has again borrowed from Foucault. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault analyses a “Panopticon”, a plan devised by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) as the paradigm of a surveillance and discipline technology. Bentham’s concept was that a program for the efficient exercise of power could be implemented through the placing of individuals in institutions according to a spatial hierarchy. In this, all subjects were to be exposed to “invisible” observation by virtue of the field of visibility in which they were to be located — for instance, in cells, rooms, beds, etc., — such observation taking place from positions adjacent to, or higher up, the hierarchy. Thus, it would become unnecessary, in Foucault’s words

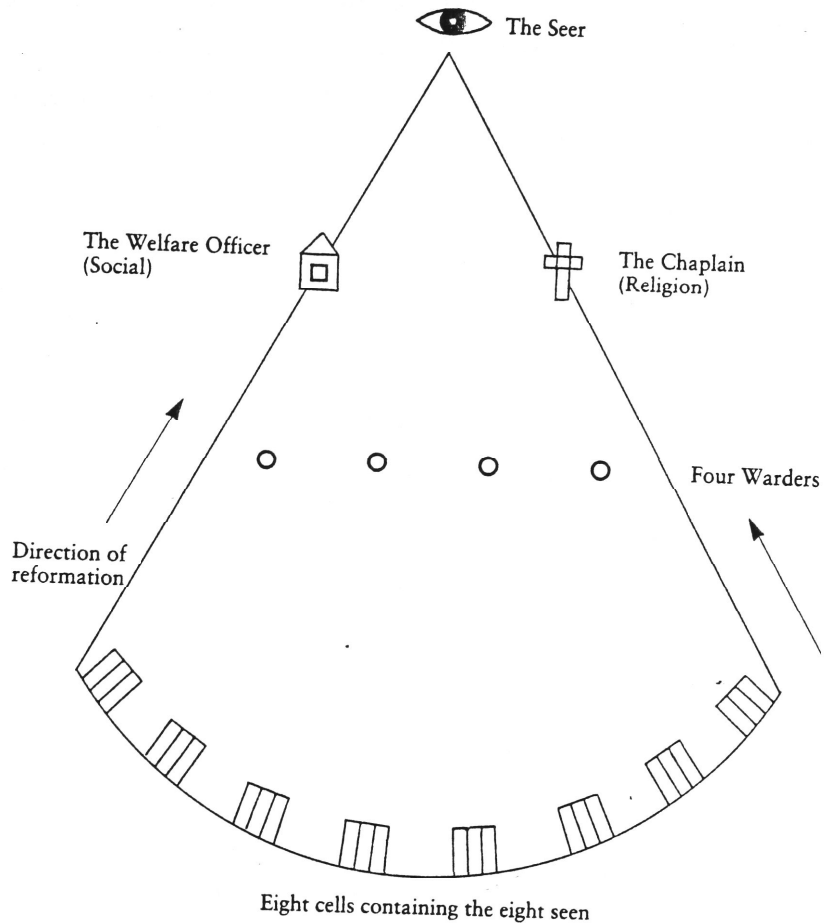
to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations. He who is subject to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraint of power; he makes the play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.¹⁰²

Mudrooroo applies this model to the running of Fremantle goal, mapping a “Panopticon of surveillance” for Wildcat’s quarters, which places him subject to the “visibility” by all the other prison groups — his fellow cell-mates, four warders, a welfare officer and chaplain, as well as the upper-hierarchical authority of the Chief Warder, Superintendent, Chief-Superintendent, Government Minister, and finally the West Australian Governor — for the period of whose “pleasure” he must remain imprisoned.

¹⁰¹ Foucault, *Discipline*, p.198.

¹⁰² Foucault, *Discipline*, p.202-3.

THE PANOPTICON



Mudrooroo, Wildcat Screaming, p. 77.

Mudrooroo also makes the point that such structures contain and control those connected with them. Again in Foucault's words: "Such is perhaps the most diabolical aspect of the idea...In this form of management, power is not totally entrusted to someone who would exercise it alone, over others, in an absolute fashion; rather, this machine is one in which everyone is caught; those who exercise this power as well as those who are subjected to it." Thus, on first entering gaol, Wildcat observes:

You know, the New Block, the division is filled with them. Soldiers I mean, ex-soldiers who after the big war just don't fit in anywhere except here. They're all like me. All lost and forsaken; all dreaming of a war in which they would come out winners with enough loot, or what have you, to last out their days. And a lot of them are screamers, and a lot of them are not right in the head; but they have all been institutionalized, just like me.¹⁰³

Then a further generalization is suggested — that the whole of White society (including that beyond the gaol) is equally institutionalized, surveillance being a cornerstone of such a mechanism. When he discovers, for instance, that a "Panopticon Prison Reform Society" has been founded by the inmates, Wildcat asks: "What is this, this panopticon?" to which the reply is given:

'This.'

'You mean the cell?'

'No, the entire prison system, including that...'

'You mean the peephole?'

'Precisely.'

'And all else?'

'Yes, and I even extend the system beyond the walls.'

'The outside?'

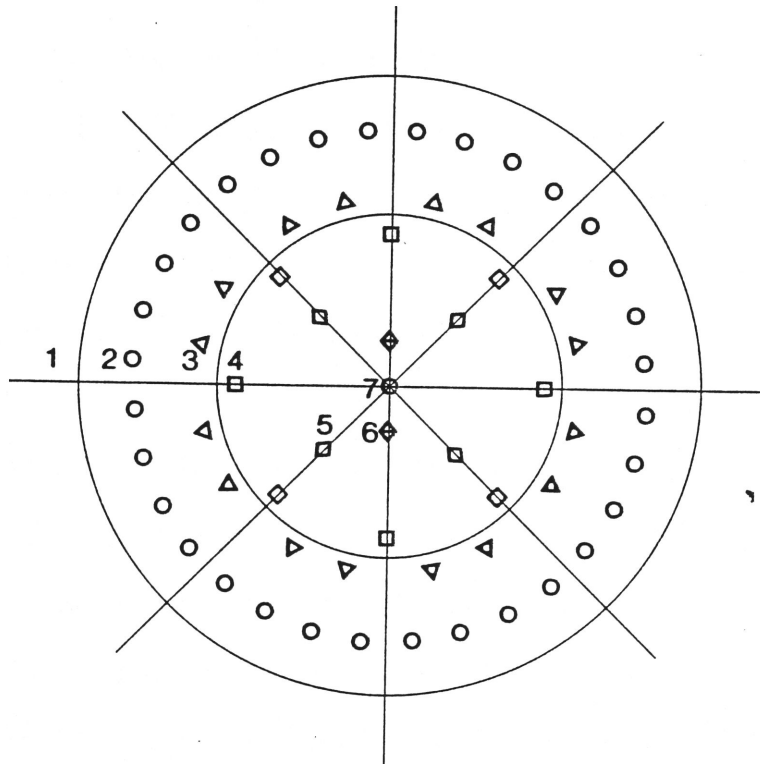
'Definitely, Australia was founded on the prison system.'¹⁰⁴

Out of this generalization evolves Mudrooroo's "Corporate Panopticon", a structure which, based on pyramid selling, encompasses all of West

¹⁰³ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.34.

¹⁰⁴ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.51.

The Corporate Panopticon



- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Outer circle: 8 segments;
8 Shareholders per segment,
64 total Shareholders | 4. 8 Directors |
| 2. 4 Company Managers per segment:
total 32 Company Managers | 5. 4 Board Members |
| 3. 16 General Managers:
2 per segment | 6. 2 Vice-Presidents |
| | 7. President or Corporate Director |
| | Possible Earnings £9,600/- |

Mudrooroo, Wildcat Screaming. p. 87.

Australian bourgeois society. From the inaugural meeting of the Corporate Panopticon “the temporary prosperity and eventual economic collapse of Western Australia began, together with the subsequent scandals which rocked the entire political and economic system of the state”, Wildcat reflects years afterwards.

But while Wildcat himself freely acknowledges his own institutionalization (“Institutionalized, a real life jailbird”), he learns to cope with the mundanity and monotony of gaol, and in this process it is his cell-mate and spiritual mentor, Robbi Singh, who is instrumental. It is through Singh that Wildcat learns to divorce his physical environment from his inner world, which in turn leads him to discover how to fly — that is, in his cat-crow dreams. Further, it is Singh who encourages Wildcat’s novel-writing — the more demonstrable aspect of his quest for Aboriginality. Singh in fact, provides the means through which Wildcat is lead away from his anonymity in White institutional society, back to his Aboriginal roots. He is also the pivotal figure in Mudrooroo’s exploration of cross-cultural identity in post-colonial literary theory, the second source of ideological influence in *Wildcat Screaming*.

Contrary to the Fanonesque argument which Mudrooroo adopted as his model for national identity formation in *Wild Cat Falling*, in *Wildcat Screaming* he writes from an ideological position which approaches co-existing cultures in a reconciliatory manner, attempting to find commonality between the oppositions implicit in the notions of “coloniser” and “colonised” — oppositions such as “them” and “us”, “self” and “other”, “sameness” and “difference” and “centre” and “fringe”. Thus, for example, the Vietnamese-born film-director and literary theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha shows that from her experience, the identity questions of “sameness” and “difference” are “interlocking”. The position of the “colonised”, she says, is a Janus-like one — one face gestures: “I am like you”; the other: “I am not like you”:

The moment the [cultural] insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside which also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not-quite and insider and not-quite an outsider....¹⁰⁵

Similarly, Homi Bhabha, referring to post-colonial textuality, argues for the "singularity" of the "colonial subject" — that is, for the uniformity of conditions under which discourses of "self" and "other" are produced in colonial situations.¹⁰⁶ He also challenges the concept of dominance as the principle regulator of human societies.

Mudrooroo's Robbi Singh then, the Indian-born subedhar from the British army, is a personalized symbol of the hybridity and syncreticity of post-colonial societies. "Yeah, freedom", Wildcat comments, "as Robbi tells me, is found in this place, in the interstices, big word that, but I've started on my encyclopedia again, and also a dictionary. 'Interstice: a narrow or small space between things or parts; crevasse.'" And through the Panopticon Prison Reform Society, which Singh has master-minded, Wildcat encounters a form of cultural blending he never thought possible:

I've never even imagined that one day, or rather night, I'd be sitting in a cell while screws jawed with a prisoner. It's a little frightening, as if the world is not divided into black and white, into them and us, but into shades of grey. Well, that'll suit me. Ain't got nothing to lose and umpteen years to get something to gain.¹⁰⁷

Thus Singh teaches Wildcat not only inner "peace and harmony" and how "you bow out of the power equation", but how to integrate his Aboriginal "differences" into a complex set of cultural circumstances. In contrast with

¹⁰⁵ Trinh T. Minh-ha, "not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference", *Inscriptions*, Nos.3,4, 1988;pp.71-76.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Homi Bhabha "The Commitment To Theory", *New Foundations*, No. 5, 1988.

¹⁰⁷ Mudrooroo, *Screaming*, p.33.

his earlier Wildcat novels, Mudrooroo now presents in his narrator-protagonist an identity model based on reconciliation rather than confrontation. Aboriginality, that is , is finally constructed as a celebration of difference, but difference that acknowledges cross-cultural "sameness".

CONCLUSION.

There are two main aspects to Mudrooroo's interpretation of Aboriginality. One refers to the political, social and economic circumstances in which most Aboriginals are living in Australia today — that is, inside a basically Westernized society. Aboriginal identity in this context is frequently articulated as that of the "colonised", and Black literature as "writing back" to the attempted "Whitewash" by the dominating, "coloniser" culture. Aboriginality is understood then, in terms of the Aboriginal response to White hegemonic constructs, such as institutionalism.

The other aspect is Aboriginality as an expression of a collective unconscious that connects contemporary Aboriginals to the time of their ancient Dreaming. In other words, it is a transhistorical essence, signifying a uniquely Aboriginal culture, without some knowledge of the metatext of which, a reading of most "authentic" Aboriginal literature is without "significance."

The critic and theorist Simon During attacks the second of these propositions — which he re-defines, by implication, as cultural essentialism — in his pithy review of *Writing from the Fringe*: "How Aboriginal is it?"¹⁰⁸ The crux of During's "serious doubts about Narogin's thesis" is that Aboriginality, like all cultural articulations can only be expressed through signifying systems (semiotics), and it is nonsense, and potentially racist, he says, to suggest that it can be understood outside of "particular economic, political, legal and cultural situations". "In fact", During concludes, "any primordial Aboriginality would itself be hybridized and textualized as soon as it is expressed in writing". While this point, I think, is, in itself valid, Narogin, as I read him, is not making a naive commitment to primordialism or racial purity. Rather, his claim is that

¹⁰⁸ Simon During, "How Aboriginal is it?", *Australian Book Review*, Feb./March, 1990; pp.21-23.

Aboriginality comprises a matrix of knowledge and practices that can be gained *only* from living within an Australian Aboriginal culture. In this sense it is unique, and the experience of "living Black", as Kevin Gilbert calls it, is sustainable as semiotic "evidence". To be Aboriginal, in other words, is to inherit, by culture, a set of signifiers which is peculiarly Aboriginal (as well as to occupy a place in Australian society which is "different" from other groups). These signifiers distinguish Aboriginality from other "colonised" (and probably indigenous) national identities.

Writing from the Fringe is a theoretic account of the defining features of Aboriginal texts. The Wildcat novels, on the other hand, illustrate in fictional mode a quest for this national identity. Throughout their course Mudrooroo explores the nature of Aboriginal "difference", and how "the signifiers of Aboriginality" can be incorporated into a lifestyle that is compatible with contemporary Western structures. Altogether, these novels demonstrate a remarkable shift in Mudrooroo's construction of Aboriginality over a period of about thirty years.

The ideological framework that underpins *Wild Cat Falling* is basically Fanonesque. Wildcat is presented as an outcast — not just as an "outsider" of the European, existentialist genre, but as a social and political "other" within a "colonised" society, who attempts to resist the White masks of assumed superiority and privilege. Except for his compliance at the end of the novel, he consistently maintains a felt sense of injustice and oppression. Wildcat manifests Fanon's third phase of the "colonised's consciousness" — what Mudrooroo describes as the "fighting phase".

But the ending of *Wild Cat Falling* is re-examined in *Doin Wildcat*, where it becomes "problematical", as indeed becomes the whole of Johnson's original text. Now Narogin counters the discourse of *Wild Cat Falling* in the light of post-modern literary theory, and re-frames the question of Aboriginality in terms of stylistics as much as ideology. He suggests that the problem of Aboriginal representation is central to a

genuine understanding of Aboriginality, there being as many images and notions of Aboriginals as there are markets to absorb "Aboriginality" as a commodity, he infers. It is only the text itself — the here and now of *Doin Wildcat*, which, like the oral texts of traditional Aboriginal literature exist, in one sense, only in the transient present — that survives as reliable and its author as "authentic". If Wildcat is presented now as more or less "untranslated", he is presented in an idiom which not original, but a re-arrangement of what currently exists. Aboriginal English (or english, or Creole, or Pidgin) that is, is exactly what this phrase implies — it is a language directly derived from Standard English. Like Wildcat, and Aboriginality, *Doin Wildcat* has been constructed from the painful irony of Australia's indigenous people attempting for the first time, to find a common identity in a land from which they have been effectively dispossessed.

Mudrooroo's notion of Aboriginality in *Wildcat Screaming* is allied with the contemporary sociological and theoretic literary argument that proposes that hybridity and syncreticity are as much a feature of post-colonialism as is the separation of "coloniser" and "colonised". What distinguishes the society of the former, according to the novel, is institutionalism, which Mudrooroo explores using Foucault's concepts of personal objectification and surveillance. Aboriginals, on the other hand, are in conflict with institutionalism, and seek a link with their spiritual heritage. Wildcat achieves this connection at the end of *Wildcat Screaming*, and in so doing, resolves the search he began — unconscious though it might have been — in the opening section of the first Wildcat novel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY — Primary Material.

NOVELS

Johnson, Colin, *Wild Cat Falling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965).

Johnson, Colin, *Long Live Sandawara* (Melbourne: Quartet Books, 1979).

Johnson, Colin, *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1983).

Narogin, Mudrooroo, *Doin Wildcat / A Novel Koori Script / As Constructed By / Mudrooroo Narogin* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1988).

Nyoongah, Mudrooroo, *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1991).

Mudrooroo, *Wild Cat Falling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992).

Mudrooroo, *Wildcat Screaming* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992).

POETRY.

Johnson, Colin, "Colin Johnson Replies to Adam Shoemaker", *Westerly*, No. 4, December, 1982, p.80.

Johnson, Colin, "Sunlight Spreading Perth in Blackness: A Bicentennial Gift Poem", extracts found in *New Literatures Review*, No.17, Summer South, 1989, pp.50-58; 43-45.

Johnson, Colin, *The Song Circle of Jacky and Selected Poems* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1986).

Johnson, Colin, *Dalwurra: The Black Bittern, A Poem Cycle* (Nedlands: Centre for Studies in Australian Literature, 1988).

Mudrooroo, *The Garden of Gethsemane: Poems from the Lost Decade* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991).

INTERVIEWS

"Colin Johnson: An Interview", *Westerly*, No. 3, 1975, pp.33-37.

Ulli Beier and Colin Johnson, "The Aboriginal Novelist Who Found Buddha", *Quadrant*, Vol. XXIX, No. 9, (1985), pp.69-75.

Interview with John Williamson and Ron Rudolphy, *Westerly*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 83-89.

Interview with Liz Thompson (ed.), *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers and Performers* (Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp.55-59.

CRITICAL WRITING and COMMENTARY

Johnson, Colin, "White Forms, Aboriginal Content" in Jack Davis and Bob Hodge (eds.), *Aboriginal Writing Today* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1985), pp.21-33; 87-89.

Johnson, Colin, "Reading the Book: Review of Reading the Country", *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Dec., 1985, pp.143-146.

Johnson, Colin, "Guerilla Poetry: Lionel Fogarty's Response to Language Genocide", *Westerly*, No. 3, Sept., 1986, pp.47-55.

Narogin, Mudrooroo, "Paperbark" in Anna Rutherford (ed.), *Aboriginal Culture Today* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press — Kunapipi, 1988), pp.36-49.

Narogin, Mudrooroo, *Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990).

BIBLIOGRAPHY — Secondary Sources.

On THE WILDCAT NOVELS

Arthur, Kateryna, "Neither Here nor There: Towards Nomadic Reading", *New Literatures Review*, No. 17, Summer South, 1989, pp.39-46.

Durack, Mary, "Foreword" to *Wild Cat Falling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965).

Fielder, John, "Postcoloniality and Mudrooroo Narogin's Ideology of Aboriginality", *Span*, No. 32, April, 1991.

McGaw, William, Review of M.Narogin, *Doin Wildcat*, *Span*, No. 27, October, 1988, pp.108-111.

Muecke, Stephen, "Available Discourses on Aborigines" in P. Botsman (ed.), *Theoretical Strategies* (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1982), pp.98-111.

Nelson, Emmanuel S., "Black America and the Australian Aboriginal literary Consciousness", *Westerly*, Vol. 30, No.4, pp.43-54.

Nelson, Emmanuel S., "Connecting with the Dreamtime: The Novels of Colin Johnson", *Southerly*, No. 3, Sept., 1986, pp.337-343.

Shoemaker, Adam, "Sex and Violence in the Black Australian Novel", *Westerly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1984), pp.45-57.

Tiffin, Chris, "Look to the New-Found Dreaming: Identity and Technique in Australian Aboriginal Writing", *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XX, No. 1, (1985), pp.156-170.

Turcotte, Gerry, Lecture Notes: *Wild Cat Falling*, Wollongong University, Department of English, 1992.

Webb, Hugh, "Doin' the Post-Colonial Story? Neidjie, Narogin and the Aboriginal narrative Intervention", *Span*, No.32, April, 1991.

On MUDROOROO and ABORIGINALITY.

During, Simon, "How Aboriginal is it?", Review of *Writing From The Fringe*, *Australian Book Review*, No. 118, Feb./March 1990, pp.21-23.

Gale, G. Fay and Brookman, Alison, *Race Relations in Australia — The Aborigines* (Sydney: McGrath-Hill Book Co., 1975).

Gelder, Ken and Salzman, Paul, *The New Diversity: Australian Fiction, 1970-88* (Melbourne: Mcphee, Gribble Publishers, 1989).

Gilbert, Kevin, *Living Black* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1977).

Hodge, Bob and Mishra, Vijay, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991).

Hodge, Bob and Mishra, Vijay, Review of *Writing From The Fringe*, in *Westerly*, No. 3 (sept.) 1990), pp.91-93.

Muecke, Stephen, "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis", *Southerly*, Vol. 48. No. 4, (1988), pp. 131-146.

Muecke, Stephen, et.al., *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1984).

O'Connor, Mark, "Aboriginal Literature Becomes A Force " in Anna Rutherford (ed.) *Aboriginal Culture Today*, pp.246-253.

Pearson, Christopher, "Aboriginal Identity and Kitsch", *Art and Text*, 14, Winter, 1984, pp.41-49.

Shoemaker. Adam, *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988* (St.Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989).

Tatz, Colin, *Race Politics in Australia* (University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979).

Thompson, Liz, ed., *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers and Performers* (Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

Webb, Hugh, "The Work of Mudrooroo Narogin: 31 Years of Literary Production, 1960-1991", *Span*, No. 33, May, 1992, pp.52-71.

GENERAL.

Ashcroft, Bill, et.al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

Bhabha, Homi, "The Commitment To Theory", *New Foundations*, No. 5, 1988.

Barthes, Roland, *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977).

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967).

Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 1961).

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975).

Karl, Frederick R. and Hamalian, Leo, eds., *The Existential Imagination: From Sade to Sartre* (London: Fawcett Publications, 1963).

Minh-ha, Trinh T., "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference", *Inscriptions*, Nos, 3,4, 1988; pp. 71-76.

Rabinow, Paul, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

Riffaterre, Michael, *Semiotics of Poetry* (London: Methuen, 1980).